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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that reading ability is positively correlated with the extent to which students read recreationally. Educators are increasingly encouraging their students to read and write on their own, outside of school. Changes in the frequency with which students (in grades 4, 8, and 11 in studies conducted from 1984 through 1994) read and write independently, as well as in the types of materials students read and write, indicate the degree to which recreation activities related to education are supported outside of the classroom. (Contains two tables, two graphs, and two bar graphs of data.) (RS)

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ED 413 573

INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

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December 1997

Reading and writing habits of students

Research has shown that reading ability is positively correlated with the extent to which students read recreationally. Educators are increasingly encouraging their students to read and write on their own, outside of school. Changes in the frequency with which students read and write independently, as well as in the types of materials students read and write, indicate the degree to which recreation activities related to education are supported outside of the classroom.

- **Independent reading and writing habits of students have remained relatively stable across all age groups since 1984, with a few exceptions. For example, although the percentage of students writing letters, notes, or messages has remained nearly constant over the years, more 8th-graders in 1994 reported writing stories outside of school at least once a week than in 1984. Also, between 1984 and 1994, the percentage of 8th- and 11th-grade students who reported keeping a diary or journal increased.**
- **Between 1984 and 1994, a greater percentage of 9-year-olds than 13- and 17-year-olds reported reading for fun almost every day. In addition, 4th-grade students were more likely than 8th- or 11th-grade students to report that they wrote stories outside of class at least once a week.**
- **In 1994, 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students who reported reading for fun at least once a week had higher average reading proficiency scores than students who reported never or hardly ever reading for fun.**
- **In 1994, the types of materials students read both at home and at school varied. For all ages, students reported having most recently read a science, social studies, or mathematics book in school than at home, while they reported most recently reading magazines more at home than in school. Nine-year-olds and 13-year-olds reported having most recently read stories more at home, while 17-year-olds reported reading stories more at school.**

Percentage of students who read for fun, by frequency and age: Selected years 1984–94

	Age 9					Age 13					Age 17				
Frequency	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994
Almost every day	53.3	54.1	54.0	56.2	57.6	35.1	36.0	35.2	37.0	31.9	30.8	28.1	31.1	26.7	29.7
1-2 times a week	27.7	26.1	25.2	28.0	25.1	35.1	31.3	31.9	32.4	32.4	33.5	32.1	31.4	32.9	31.4
1-2 times a month	7.1	6.9	5.7	5.8	5.3	14.2	15.3	13.4	12.8	13.9	16.7	20.8	15.5	17.8	15.3
Few times a year	3.0	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.0	7.2	7.7	8.8	8.4	9.9	10.3	10.1	11.8	11.9	11.9
Never/hardly ever	8.9	9.1	11.6	6.8	9.0	8.5	9.7	10.8	9.5	11.8	8.7	8.9	10.2	10.7	11.7

Percentage of students who wrote outside of class at least once a week, by writing habit and grade: Selected years 1984–94

	Grade 4					Grade 8					Grade 11				
Writing habit	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994
Keep a diary/journal	—	—	—	—	—	25.9	28.6	30.9	29.8	32.8	19.0	22.2	21.3	22.5	27.0
Write for school paper	—	—	—	—	—	8.0	8.1	9.2	11.1	10.2	5.3	4.8	7.1	5.7	8.5
Write letters to relatives	32.5	32.3	36.5	33.6	34.9	37.3	41.9	47.2	45.8	45.1	36.2	43.9	38.5	38.0	38.1
Write notes or messages	43.7	44.7	45.9	45.4	43.9	67.9	70.8	73.5	72.5	71.5	73.7	81.5	78.2	78.9	77.2
Write stories	25.9	24.2	25.6	28.8	25.5	10.2	15.3	14.3	16.8	18.0	11.7	15.3	14.2	15.8	15.9

— Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress. *Almanac: Reading 1984 to 1994*, and *Writing 1984 to 1994*, 1996.

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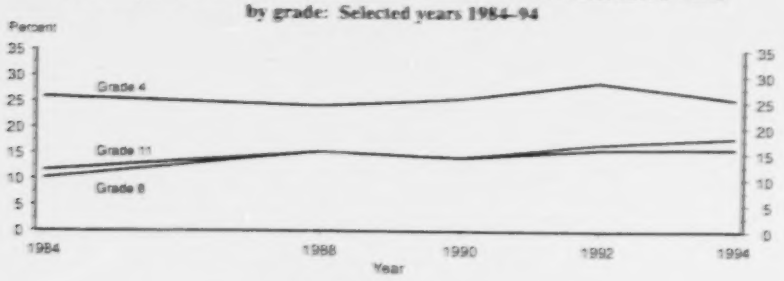
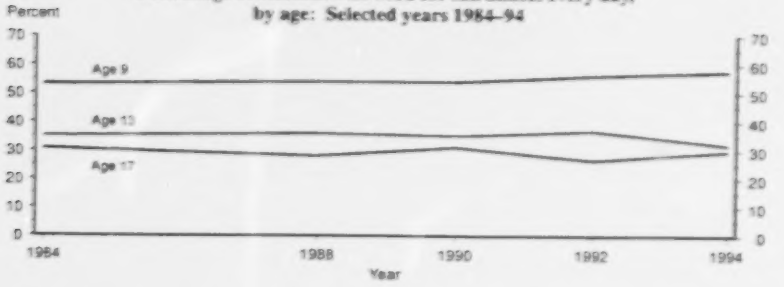
Reading and writing habits of students

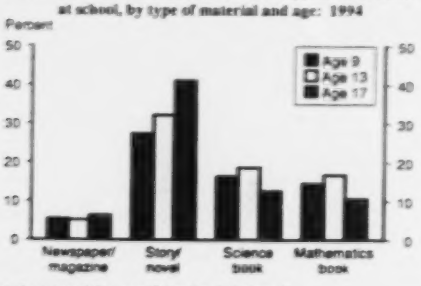
Percentage of students who wrote stories outside of class at least once a week, by grade: Selected years 1984–94



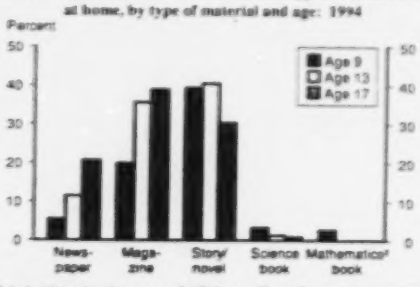
Percentage of students who read for fun almost every day, by age: Selected years 1984–94



Percentage of students who read various types of materials[1] at school, by type of material and age: 1994



Percentage of students who read various types of materials[1] at home, by type of material and age: 1994



[1] Defined as the most recent type of material read.

[2] In 1994, the percentages of students aged 13 and 17 who read mathematics books at home were less than 1.0, and therefore the percentages are not discernable in the graph.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *Almanac: Reading, 1984 to 1994, and Writing, 1984 to 1994*, 1996.

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